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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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Contents

<i>Miles Brewton, Goldsmith</i>	1
FRANK L. HORTON	
<i>John Drinker, Portrait Painter and Limner</i>	15
E. BRYDING ADAMS	
<i>The Development of Regional Style in the Catawba River Valley: A Further Look</i>	31
LUKE BECKERDITE	
<i>Book Reviews</i>	49

Miles Brewton, Goldsmith

FRANK HORTON

A rainy Sunday sojourn in July, 1980, brought about the eventual identification of what is now recognized as the earliest surviving South Carolina silver—indeed, the earliest *southern* silver known today. MESDA staff member Brad Rauschenberg, while visiting Strawberry Chapel in Berkeley County to examine a piece of furniture, found that the church silver was on view for a special quarterly meeting, having been brought from a Charleston bank vault. The small church, begun in 1725 as a chapel of ease in St. John's Parish, was intended to serve the lower section of the Parish and the community of Childsbury, which no longer exists. James Child had envisioned an elegant town on the site, surrounding a university also planned, but Strawberry Chapel is all that remains of Child's project on the Western Branch of the Cooper River.¹

The Chapel's collection of church silver was found to contain a standing cup and a paten, both with the mark "MB," and both pieces giving every appearance of being American. Accordingly, they were photographed, and the prints placed in the MESDA research files in an "unknown artisan" category. In the fall of the same year MESDA archivist Rosemary Estes, while reviewing Edward Alfred Jones' *The Old Silver of American Churches* prior to a revision planned by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, found a significant clue. Illustrated in Jones were two standing cups with the same touch used on the Strawberry Chapel silver, and these cups had similar histories of early use in South Carolina. A week before this discovery of the second group of work by "MB," the author had found an early record describing Miles Brewton of Charleston as a "goldsmith." The

recognition of the cups in Jones served to provide the stimulus needed to make an association with the Brewton research, much to the jubilation of the MESDA staff.

Miles Brewton and his trade were both identified in a 1901 publication, but the author, A. S. Salley, Jr., interpreted the term “goldsmith” as a representation of the trade of a banker.² Milby Burton agreed with this interpretation in the introduction to his work on South Carolina silversmiths,³ and used Brewton, along with Peter Jacob Guerard and Robert Brewton, to illustrate the fact that seventeenth and early eighteenth century “goldsmiths” were occasionally just bankers rather than artificers working gold and silver.



Figure 2. Touchmark attributed to Miles Brewton (1675-1745); this example is from the standing cup, Figure 4.

The discovery of three standing cups and a paten, all produced by the same artisan during the first quarter of the eighteenth century and all from parish churches near Charleston (Fig. 1), provided a sound basis for making an attribution of the “MB” mark (Fig. 2) to Miles Brewton (1675-1745). Brewton, who was occasionally called “Michael” in early records, arrived in South Carolina on 12 July 1684 with his parents and two sisters, Susanna and Elizabeth.⁴ The names of Brewton’s parents have not been located. Brewton is not mentioned in existing records again until 1702, when he, along with silversmith Nicholas DeLonguemare, blacksmith Dale (Daniel) Gale, planter Edward Loughton, and merchant William Gibbon, was appointed to appraise the estate of William Slow.⁵ This record tempts us to believe that Brewton, then twenty-seven, may have had a trade association with DeLonguemare. The latter silversmith, in fact, was the only artisan definitely known to have

been practicing that trade in Charleston at the time when Brewton reached the apprenticeable age of fourteen in 1689. DeLonguemare's death in 1711/12 evidently may have left Brewton with only one trade competitor, Solomon Legare (1674-1760), working from c. 1696. Also, we should not ignore Peter Jacob Guerard, who arrived in Carolina in 1680 and was called a goldsmith in 1693/4 when he executed a bond in Charleston;⁶ he was similarly identified in 1696/7 when he was listed in an alien privileges act designed to equate Huguenots and other Europeans with English settlers.⁷ Burton also suggests that Guerard was a banker; in any event, he was dead before June, 1711, when he was mentioned in the will of his brother John.⁸ It was during this period that Brewton executed the three cups and paten, as we shall see.

The stylistically earliest standing cup (Fig. 3) was made for St. Paul's Church at Stono in Colleton County. St. Paul's Parish was created in 1706, and the church built in 1708.⁹ The cup is not engraved, but has a poorly scratched "SP" in a shield on the side. The second cup illustrated in *Old Silver of American Churches* (Fig. 4) is one engraved "Belonging to St. Thomas Parish in South Carolina Anno Dom: 1711," and may have been made for the first Pompion Hill Chapel, a frame structure constructed in 1703 on the east side of the East Branch of the Cooper River. It is possible as well that this cup was made for the Brick Parish Church, which was completed in 1708 and stood on the northwest side of the Wando River.¹⁰ In either case, the cup eventually was used at the second Pompion Hill Chapel, a brick building finished in 1765 and replacing the earlier frame church.

The Strawberry Chapel standing cup (Fig. 5) and its accompanying paten (Fig. 6) are both engraved "St. John's Parish in South Carolina in America." The parish was created by Act of 1706, and Biggin Church, as it was called, was begun in 1710 and completed the following year.¹¹ The church silver was moved to Strawberry Chapel later in the eighteenth century.

The three standing cups have raised bodies and bases, and the stems were cast in two parts. It is interesting that each of the stems was run from a different casting pattern, perhaps an indication of the quality of silver that Miles Brewton was making. It is also possible, of course, that he acquired these castings from other shops.



Figure 3. Standing cup, HOA 8 $\frac{1}{8}$ " , with poorly scratched SP in shield on cup side, and with MB twice touched at cup rim, made for St. Paul's, Stono, in Colleton County, built in 1708. MESDA research file S-10925.

The name of Miles Brewton's first wife is unknown, but in 1698 their first child, Robert, was born. Daughters Jane, Elizabeth, Ruth, Mary, and Rebecca followed, and all these children except Mary survived their father.¹² Though he received warrants for tracts of land in Colleton County, southwest of Charleston, as early as 1708 and 1709, it is thought that Brewton made his home in Charleston. In January, 1710/11, he received three lots by purchase from Anne Vignan (DeVignon?).¹³

That the Brewton family was located in Charleston is suggested by a document which appears to make a rather curious twist of the spelling of the Brewton name:

Memorandum. That on this 12th day of Feby 1711/12 appeared before me Thomas Moore of Charles Town Neck in Berkly [sic] County Gent and made oath on the holy Evangelist that on the 2nd day June last his house was broken open before day, by some Person or Persons unknown, at w^{ch} Time he had Stolen from him the Several pieces of Silver Plate here after mentioned and he does verily believe that the Porringer mentioned not to be Marked otherwise than wth Mr. Brewingtons the Goldsmith that made it and this Day delivered to him . . .¹⁴

The stolen silver was later found by William Williams in the woods of Colleton County, tied up in a linen cloth. Burton notes that diligent search has not revealed further record of Mr. Brewington. Surely this must have been Miles Brewton.¹⁵

Brewton served his community in various civil offices. He was listed as a captain in one of the two militia companies in Charleston as early as 1709, and noted for displaying considerable gallantry in the riot occasioned by the Thomas Broughton and Robert Gibbes contest for governorship. He was appointed Powder Receiver in 1717, an office he held for the rest of his life, and served as foreman of the jury that tried Stede Bonnet and his pirate associates in 1718.¹⁶ In 1724 the dwelling house of "Coll. Michael Brewton in Charles Town" was the scene of the qualification of some 38 individuals as members of the Commons House of Assembly.¹⁷

We do not know when Miles Brewton's first wife died. He was married to Susannah Porter, widow of Mathew Porter, a lawyer and "gentleman," by November, 1730. At that time, Brewton, along with his wife, his son Robert, and others,



Figure 4. Standing cup, HOA $8\frac{1}{16}$ ", engraved "Belonging to St Thomas Parish in South Carolina Anno Dom: 1711," with MB twice touched at cup rim. MESDA research file S-10928.

entered into an agreement regarding lands for St. Philip's Church in Charleston. Susannah died in July, 1741, and he next married in February, 1742/3 to Mary Paine, the widow of James Paine, a merchant. Mrs. Paine was also the former widow of Timothy Bellamy, a feltmaker and merchant.¹⁸

The *South-Carolina Gazette*, July 22, 1745, records the July 19 death of "Colonel Miles Brewton, Powder-Receiver of this Province and in the 70th Year of his Age. What is very remarkable, it was just that Day 61 Years since He and his Two surviving Sisters first accompanied their Parents into this Country . . ." The notice continued with an eulogy on the virtues of life in the Low Country, discounting the "Prejudice entertained by our Northern Neighbours against Us, as if we were a Colony of Youths, and that Grey-Hairs would not flourish in this Climate."

In spite of the various titles appended to Miles Brewton's name—that of captain, colonel, and gentleman—his will, written in August, 1743, refers to himself simply as "Miles Brewton of Charlestown in Berkley [sic] County . . . Gold Smith." It was witnessed by Edward Scull, a cabinetmaker, Daniel Badger, a house painter, and William Smith.

Brewton left his wife Mary "Five hundred Pounds this Currency, Two Silver Porringers, two Silver Spoons, one Gold mourning Ring, one Suit of mourning, One Bed and Furniture, with all the household goods She had when She was married to me." He also wished her to have the liberty of living rent free in his new brick house and its dependencies and the use of "Luca a Yellow Girl to wait on her as long as she remains a Widow or goes by the name of Brewton . . . [also] one Milch Cow for her own use, . . . [and] the use of my Pew in the meeting House." His "new brick house" was apparently not completed in 1743, for he directed his executor to have it finished, and to permit his wife to continue to live in the "large dwelling House" until she could occupy the new dwelling.

His maiden sister, Susanna, was to enjoy "One Room with its Furniture up two pair of Stairs for her own lodging and proper use, and also her Dyett, maintenance and washing; with free liberty to pass and repass up and down Stairs to her Room without any hinderance whatsoever," together with the service of two slaves, Belinda and Maryann. He also left her a gold mourning ring and £500 South Carolina currency. His sister Elizabeth Burt was also to receive a gold mourning ring, and



Figure 5. Standing cup, HOA 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ ", engraved "St John's Parish in South Carolina in America," with MB twice touched at cup rim. Base partially restored. MESDA research file S-10929.

rings were left to Martha Savage and Mrs. Elizabeth Mode.

Four grandchildren were mentioned: Miles Brewton was left four slaves, Will, Jack, Dick, and Peter, and a sum of money to be invested until he came of age. Anne Brewton was to receive a gold mourning ring, a Negro woman called Rose, with her children Hagar, Toby, Ben, and Cloe, and "one Bed and Furniture, one Chest of Drawers of fifty pounds price current money . . . Six Cane Chairs, a Table, one dozen of Pewter plaits, and Six Pewter Dishes, one dozen of good knives, One Silver porringer, Two Silver Spoons with a mourning Sute of Cloaths . . .," and a sum of money. Robert Brewton was to receive a lot in "Bewfort Town" and a second lot in Willtown. Granddaughter Mary, the wife of Joseph Jones, was to receive the slave Maryann after the death of his sister, Susanna. At that time, Belinda was to receive her freedom.

Brewton's daughter, Ruth Pinckney, was to receive a gold mourning ring, the slaves Sarah and her daughter Kate, and "my little Silver Salver, & my little Silver Tankard." Another mourning ring went to his daughter Jane Bruce, along with two slaves, Quoco and Boston. Daughter Rebecca Roach received a mourning ring, three slaves, a lot in Kings Street, "One large Silver Tankard with all My Iron Screws & House for packing of Deer Skins," and the use of half of his pew in St. Philips Church. His son Robert was appointed executor and was to receive "all the rest residue and remainder of my Lands, houses, Negroes, Plate Gold Silver, money Goods & Chattels and Estate both Real and personal whatsoever in this province or Elsewhere."¹⁹

Robert Brewton (1698-1759) was to follow his father's occupation, if we are to credit a deed of lease made in January, 1722/3, in which Robert Brewton of Charleston, "Gold Smith," and his wife Millicent transferred lot 39 in that city to John Frazier, a merchant. The deed of release, however, called him a "Merchant." Robert succeeded his father as the Powder Receiver of the Province, and he also served as an officer in the local militia. His son, Miles, was to become the great merchant who built the magnificent townhouse still standing today on King Street.

The discovery of the Strawberry Chapel silver in July, 1980, was really only its rediscovery. With the impending advance of Sherman into the Charleston area, Keating Ball and his body servant Friday, of Comingtee plantation, located near



Figure 6. Paten, HOA $2\frac{1}{16}$ " , WOA base (partially restored) $2\frac{1}{16}$ " , WOA top $5\frac{3}{4}$ " , engraved "St John's Parish in South Carolina in America," with MB twice touched under plate. MESDA research file S-10930.

Strawberry Chapel, had buried the silver in a mahogany chest under his rice mill one night in February, 1865. As it happened, both Comingtee and Strawberry Chapel were spared, and after the danger was over attempts were made to recover the silver. However, both Keating Ball and Friday were unable to locate where they had hidden the chest. The story of the Comingtee treasure was passed down through the generations to Miss Charlotte Ball, and in 1946 a search party was organized with the assistance of Milo King, who had worked with a metal detector at Fort Ticonderoga in New York State. Grover Sullivan, the superintendent of Comingtee, King, and several helpers removed boards from the floor of the old rice mill. A mewing signal from the detector spurred fervent digging which only revealed an abandoned iron plate, probably part of the old mill machinery, and other small bits of iron. The day ended in disappointment, and with Milo King's remark, "the plantation guards its secret well," the hunt was ended. Miss Ball, however, still believed that the treasure was there, and Grover Sullivan believed her. He returned night after night to dig further, and on the fifth night he removed the iron plate which had been discovered at first, and just below the plate was the rotting

chest. There lay the six silver vessels, the sacramental plate of Strawberry Chapel, two later alms basins, a silver-gilt cup of French origin, a tall flagon of London make with a date letter for 1724-25, and the standing cup and paten. Like the cup and paten, the flagon bears the engraving "St John's Parish in South Carolina in America." The three engraved pieces, according to tradition, were a gift of King George I,²⁰ though proof of such royal favor has not been found.



Figure 6a. Paten engraving.



Figure 7. The St. John's Parish silver discovery, as illustrated in the Saturday Evening Post, June, 1947.



Figure 8. Condition of the St. John's silver as found, courtesy Mrs. Ernest R. Daniell, warden, Strawberry Chapel.

FOOTNOTES

1. Samuel Gaillard Stoney, *Plantations of The Carolina Low Country* (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1938), pp. 52, 112.
2. A. S. Salley, Jr., "Col. Miles Brewton and Some of His Descendants," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 2, p. 128, hereinafter cited as *SCHGM*. Salley referred to Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* to define "goldsmith," and this source does give the profession of banker as second reference, the first being "one who manufactures gold."

3. E. Milby Burton, *South Carolina Silversmiths 1690-1860* (Charleston: The Charleston Museum, 1942), p. xii.
4. Salley, "Col. Miles Brewton," p. 128, and Charleston County, S.C., *Wills, 1740-1747*, Vol. 5, pp. 496-500, which mentions his two sisters, then Susanna Brewton and Elizabeth Burt.
5. A. S. Salley, Jr., "Abstracts from the Records of the Court of Ordinary of the Province of South Carolina, 1700-1712," *SCHGM*, Vol. 12, p. 152.
6. *SCHGM*, Vol. 43, pp. 9-11; Vol. 9, pp. 75-76.
7. Nicholas Trott, *The Laws of the Province of South-Carolina* (Charleston: Lewis Timothy, 1736), Vol. I, pp. 61-63, "An ACT for Making Aliens free of this Part of this Province, and for granting Liberty of Conscience to all Protestants," ratified 10 March 1696/7.
8. *SCHGM*, Vol. 43, pp. 9-11.
9. *Ibid*, Vol. 11, p. 72.
10. Robert F. Clute, *The Annals and Parish Register of St. Thomas and St. Denis Parish in South Carolina* (Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cogswell, 1884), pp. 10-20.
11. Frederick Dalcho, *An Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina* (Charleston: 1820, reprint New York: Arno Press, 1972), pp. 265, 273. Dalcho states that "The Sacramental Plate, with the exception of the French Chalice [Figure 9, at foot of flagon], was, probably, purchased by the Parish. It has the following inscription on each piece: *St. John's Parish, South-Carolina in America.*" This would include the standing cup and paten attributed to Miles Brewton, and the London flagon of 1724-25 make. The two alms basins in Figure 9 are of later origin.
12. Salley, "Col. Miles Brewton," p. 130, and *Wills, 1740-1747*, *op. cit.*
13. Salley, A. S., Jr., *Warrants for Lands in South Carolina 1672-1711* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), pp. 644, 653, and *Records of Secretary of Province & Register of Province of S.C., 1714-1719*, manuscript p. 91, an index to grants and conveyances.
14. Charleston County, S.C., *Miscellaneous Records, 1714-17*, pp. 79-80.
15. Burton, *Silversmiths*, p. 30. The *Register of St. Philip's Parish 1720-1758*, contains an index with the name "Millicent Brewington," to be found on page 259. The entry on this page records the burial, on April 12, 1727, of "Millicent Brewton." She was the first wife of Robert, son of Miles Brewton.
16. A. S. Salley, Jr., "Col. Miles Brewton," pp. 128, 129, as quoted from *McCready's History of South Carolina Under the Proprietary Government*, p. 491, 128.
17. *Records in the British Public Records Office Relating to South Carolina*, Vol. 11, pp. 261-263.
18. A. S. Salley, Jr., "Col. Miles Brewton," pp. 128-129; Charleston County, S.C., *Land Records, Miscellaneous, Book H*, pp. 44-47, *Book D*, p. 18, *Book Y*, pp. 32-37.
19. Charleston County, S.C., *Wills, 1740-1747*, Vol. 5, pp. 496-500.
20. Herbert Ravenel Sass and Charlotte Ball, "How the Comingtee Treasure Was Found," *Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 219 (June 1947), p. 28ff.



Figure 1. Sarah deMontargis Rutherford (born c. 1795). Oil on canvas, 30 x 23 $\frac{3}{8}$. Signed on the stretcher: "Sarah D. Rutherford/A. D. 180[1 or 7]/by Drinker." MESDA accession 2397-1.

Sarah deMontargis Rutherford was the daughter of Sarah Darke and Thomas Rutherford, Jr. of Jefferson County, Virginia. She was also the granddaughter of General William Darke, a Revolutionary War hero. She married Dr. John Briscoe III (1789-1834) of Berkeley County, Virginia.⁴⁴ This portrait of Sarah as a child descended in the Briscoe family with the two other Briscoe portraits now attributed to John Drinker. It is Drinker's only extant signed work, probably painted in 1801 when Drinker made his final move to Berkeley County. Drinker's style is not totally developed here; he seems to progress in many of his later works. This portrait may be somewhat deceptive, however, since it has undergone considerable restoration.

John Drinker, Portrait Painter and Limner

E. BRYDING ADAMS

In recent years a group of portrait artists has been identified in the Upper Shenandoah Valley of Maryland and Virginia. These artists include John Drinker, Jacob Frymire, Joshua Johnston, Frederick Kemmelmeyer, Oldridge / Aldridge, and Charles Peale Polk, to name a few.¹ Although each artist had his own style, there are similarities in their work which suggest the possibility of a Valley "school." Most were itinerant artists painting prominent, local personalities while moving from town to town during the last quarter of the 18th century and first quarter of the 19th. Whether these painters were actually associated in any way has not been documented, nevertheless as more information is uncovered we may have a better understanding of their movement and relationships in the Shenandoah Valley.

In 1973 the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts acquired three portraits which descended in the Briscoe family of Berkeley County, West Virginia. The sitters were Dr. John Briscoe, his wife Eleanor Magruder Briscoe, and future daughter-in-law, Sarah deMontargis Rutherford. The latter portrait is signed on the stretcher, "A. D. 1801(or 7) by Drinker." Recent research in Philadelphia and the Upper Shenandoah Valley has revealed "Drinker" to be the artist, John Drinker. The life and painting career of John Drinker is the subject of this article.

John Drinker was born on March 12, 1760 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.² His parents were John Drinker (1716-1787) and Susanna Allen Drinker (1721-1787), who were married on December 29, 1752.³ John Drinker, Sr. worked primarily as a

bricklayer and later as a merchant. Due to his successful real estate investments in Philadelphia between 1765 and 1767, he acquired substantial wealth for his family.⁴ He purchased property between Pine and Union (now Delancey) Streets in the Society Hill area of Philadelphia. There he built twin three-story brick houses and eight tenements in a court directly behind the houses. The buildings were quickly leased by wealthy parishioners of the newly completed St. Peter's Church who were seeking housing there. Today the property is known as Drinker's Court.⁵

John Drinker, Jr. was the second of three sons; the other two were Joseph (1756-1798) and William (1761-1793).⁶ Though Joseph Drinker continues to remain elusive, existing tax assessment records locate William Drinker in Philadelphia, possibly in one of his father's tenements from 1781 until his death in 1793.⁷ John Drinker, Jr. is first recorded on June 18, 1787, in the Philadelphia *Pennsylvania Packet*, advertising a drawing school:

DRINKER, _____, Just Opened, A Drawing School, Upon a New Plan. Mr. Drinker having increased his number of pupils, has removed his school to the house of Mr. Pratt, Painter, in Pine-street, between New-Market and St. Peter's church, where he intends, with the assistance of Mr. Pratt, to teach the art of Drawing and Colouring, in all the different methods now in use; and in order to create an emulation among the pupils, intends to distribute honorary premiums; such as, silver and ivory pallets, port-crayons, dressing boxes, drawing or writing desks, caps of mathematical instruments, &c. &c. to those that excel, once in every six months at least, provided they can receive the proper allowances for that end from such parents or guardians that approve thereof, and are inclined to put their children forward by subscribing thereto, when the youngest pupils will stand upon an equality with the eldest. The price of tuition is, 20s. entrance and 20s. for the first month, and 40s. for every succeeding month. Hours of attendance for the Ladies will be, from 5 till 7 in the afternoons of Monday, Wednesday and Friday; and for the Gentlemen from 6 to 8 in the mornings of the same days.

N. B. Likenesses in Miniature at 3 guineas each.

Ditto in Crayons at 2 guineas each. Ditto in Oyl [sic] from 1 to 5 guineas each. Ornamental Painting and Pencil-Work don [sic] as usual in Oyl [sic] or water colours, on wood, tin, copper, glass, ivory, linen, or paper. Painting on Glass taught as above, in an elegant and durable manner, with or without Metzzotinto Prints.⁸

This advertisement suggests that John Drinker had a previous drawing school in Philadelphia, although no tax assessment or advertisement reveals its location. It also confirms a relationship between the artist, Matthew Pratt, and John Drinker. Similarities in artistic style do exist between the two men.⁹

In that same year, 1787, both of John Drinker's parents died, Susanna on February 9th and John Sr. on March 13th.¹⁰ As mentioned earlier, John's inheritance as well as that of his two brothers was considerable. For this reason, on February 28th of the following year, 1788, John was able to buy property in Berkeley County, Virginia (now West Virginia).¹¹ In December of 1788 he sold the same land, the deed book describing him as "John Drinker painter of the said city" (Philadelphia).¹² Following his father's business experience, John bought and sold land in Virginia for the next 36 years.

John was still living in Philadelphia in 1789, as the tax assessments list William Drinker, John Drinker's estate, and John Drinker, all of Dock Ward.¹³ But on January 20th of that year, John again bought property in Virginia.¹⁴ He may have moved to Virginia between 1790 and 1793, since only William Drinker and John Drinker's estate are recorded in the Philadelphia tax assessments.¹⁵ John reappears in the 1794 Philadelphia tax assessment along with John Drinker's estate; William was not listed, having died on November 1, 1793.¹⁶ John probably had to return to Philadelphia to manage the affairs of his father's estate. The tax assessment confirms his existence there in 1795 and 1796 and during the same two years he is first recorded as an artist in the Philadelphia City Directory, located on Laurel Street in Dock Ward.¹⁷

On April 12, 1797, John Drinker married Elizabeth Peppers in Berkeley County, Virginia.¹⁸ Elizabeth was the daughter of Joshua Peppers (1770-1805), a farmer, and Mary Berkeley Peppers of Berkeley County, Virginia.¹⁹ The new couple must have taken residence in Philadelphia, since John Drinker was

taxed there for personal property and a dwelling.²⁰ The 1800 Census of Philadelphia also recorded John Drinker with a household consisting of Drinker, his wife, and one other female aged 45 or older.²¹ In 1801 and 1802 John is again listed in the City Directory of Philadelphia on Laurel Street as a portrait painter and limner.²² However, this is his last listing in the Directory, and in 1802 only John Drinker's estate and a dwelling are found in the tax assessment.²³ John and Elizabeth Drinker undoubtedly moved to Berkeley County, Virginia, sometime during the first eight months of 1801, and a deed dated August 28, 1801 verifies the move by describing John Drinker as a resident of Berkeley County.²⁴ John, however, continued ownership of a dwelling and his father's estate in Philadelphia until 1810.²⁵

On January 1, 1808, John bought additional property in Berkeley County, where the remains of his stone farmhouse and outbuildings stand today.²⁶ He also leased to Mary Peppers, his mother-in-law, "the house and garden which she now occupies; with the kitchen and stables thereunto belonging . . . to pay one cent per annum . . ."²⁷ The 1810 Virginia Census listed Drinker, his wife, his mother-in-law, and five slaves.²⁸ In 1812 and 1813 the *Martinsburg Gazette* notes a letter at the Post Office for Elizabeth Drinker, and, in 1814, one for John Drinker.²⁹ During these years the Drinkers must have been tending their farm and building their house, although no definite construction date has been established for the house.

The 1820 Virginia Census again located John Drinker and his family in Berkeley County, though Mary Peppers was not listed; two males and one female, all aged 10 to 16, were listed.³⁰ They were probably orphans which the Drinkers had taken in to help with the farm work, since they had no children. The Berkeley County census, in fact, lists two as farm hands and records that all three were naturalized. Seven slaves are also mentioned.³¹

Drinker made one more land transaction before his death.³² Then, on February 23, 1826, the *Martinsburg Gazette* announced that John Drinker "died on Friday morning last, at an advanced age."³³ His gravestone reads:

In/Memory of/John Drinker/Member of the Society/of
Friends/who was born in/Philadelphia March/the 12
1760 and died/at this residence in this/County February
the/16 1826 in 66th/year of his age.³⁴

He bequeathed to his "beloved wife Elizabeth Drinker, all the residue of my [sic] estate of every description, that is to say all the land, negroes, bonds, bill notes, and open accounts, together with all of my personal estate of every description, after the payment of my debts . . ." ³⁵

Elizabeth Drinker lived until April 15, 1858. ³⁶ She is recorded in the 1830 through the 1850 censuses with up to nine slaves, and Ireland is listed as her birthplace. ³⁷ She dealt in real estate as her husband had, ³⁸ and in the 1840s was mentioned in connection with a Methodist Union Camp Meeting. ³⁹ Elizabeth is buried next to her husband, John Drinker, with various other members of the Peppers family in Morgan Chapel Cemetery in Bunker Hill, Berkeley County, West Virginia. Her will was recorded in the Berkeley County Courthouse in October, 1856. She bequeathed most of her wealth to her relatives and specified that her slaves be freed after a period of time. ⁴⁰

Information regarding Drinker's painting career is quite vague in comparison with his genealogical record. Of the eight portraits that have been attributed to him, three are signed, but only one of these three has been located. The subject of the signed portrait is Sarah D. Rutherford; the signature is on the stretcher. The other two portraits from the Briscoe family also had the same handwriting on their stretchers, although the inscription has completely faded. ⁴¹ All of the portraits are of prominent figures in the Berkeley and Jefferson Counties of Virginia and West Virginia. No known works exist from the period Drinker spent in Philadelphia operating the drawing school.

Drinker's painting skill seems to vary from portrait to portrait. Generally, his sitters are painted from knee up if sitting, and from waist up if standing. The hair is either hidden or quite curly on the women, as style dictated, and the men have bangs cropped high on the forehead. The ears are usually covered by the hair or placed tightly against the head. The faces are rounded with pinkish cheeks. The eyes in most of the portraits have an almost crossed appearance, usually deeply set and almond in shape. The noses are consistently long with a rounded tip, exposing a three-quarter view of the face. The reddish lips are thin and have a slight upward turn at the corners. Drinker experienced great difficulty dealing with the sitter's hands, just as Matthew Pratt did. The hands tend to be hidden or painted in a fat, rounded manner with no noticeable

bone structure.

The women's clothing is current with the 1800 to 1801 vogue.⁴² They are wearing long sleeved morning dresses with an empire waistline and white lace fichu at the neck. Both women's portraits have muslin caps with ribbon. The men's clothing follows a style current between 1800 and 1810.⁴³ Their costumes have high shirt collars, waistcoats under high-waisted, double-breasted, tailed coats with a most distinctive bow-tied cravat.



Figure 2. Dr. John Briscoe, Jr. (July 2, 1752-May 12, 1818). Oil on canvas, 31 1/2 x 25 1/2. Attributed to John Drinker, c. 1801. MESDA accession 973-1.

Dr. John Briscoe, Jr. (1730-1774) was the son of Elizabeth McMillan and Dr. John Briscoe (1717-1788), a prominent Justice of the Peace in Berkeley County, West Virginia. John Briscoe, Jr. married Eleanor Magruder on February 19, 1784, whose companion portrait is attributed to John Drinker as well. Jefferson County records show that John Briscoe, Sr. purchased land near Charlestown, West Virginia in 1784, where he built "Piedmont," a two-story brick dwelling. This house descended in the family. John Jr. followed in his father's footsteps, also becoming a doctor, Justice of the Peace in 1801, and County Sheriff in 1807.⁴⁵

This portrait is attributed to Drinker on the basis of the family connection to Sarah D. Rutherford's portrait and the same general likeness. Its original stretcher bore an illegible inscription with the same handwriting as the Drinker signature on the Rutherford portrait. Of greatest similarity to the Rutherford portrait are the facial features and the background of trees and sky. The painting was probably painted around 1801, when Drinker first moved to Berkeley County. This date is further substantiated by the sitter's costume.

In the background of four of the eight portraits is the base of a column, and drapery also adorns two of these. The column and the wall which supports it give the appearance of the sitter being in an interior space, with a distant vista of trees and a grey-blue sky at sunset. Colors are generally muted, and shades of blue predominate. Furniture is used as props in only two of the portraits, consisting of an upholstered armchair and a Chippendale side chair.

It is the hope of the author that this article will uncover other portraits by Drinker in Virginia and possibly in Philadelphia. Any additional genealogical information about Drinker would also be welcomed.



Figure 3. Eleanor Magruder Briscoe (born January 16, 1766). Oil on canvas, 31½ x 25½. Attributed to John Drinker, c. 1801. MESDA accession 973-2.

Eleanor Magruder Briscoe was the daughter of Alexander and Susan Lamar Magruder of Frederick, Maryland. She married Dr. John Briscoe, Jr. on February 19, 1784. They had eight children, one of whom, John Briscoe III, followed in the family tradition and became a doctor. He married Sarah deMontargis Rutherford, whose portrait was also done by John Drinker.⁴⁶

There is a close likeness between this painting and the Rutherford portrait, particularly in the eyes, noses, and lips. The attention to detail in the clothing and a similar color scheme are typical characteristics of Drinker's work.



Figure 4. Warner Lewis Wormeley (March 24, 1785-1814). Oil on canvas, 40¾ x 32. Attributed to John Drinker, c. 1805. The Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Warner Lewis Wormeley was the son of Ralph Wormeley V (1744-1806) of Middlesex County, Virginia, and Eleanor Tayloe (1756-1815) of Williamsburg, Virginia. He was one of seven children. Wormeley was educated in Virginia until 1801, when his father sent him to England to finish his education and to gain experience in a mercantile house. Wormeley proved to be profligate, and returned to Virginia sometime in 1804. After an argument with his father, he ran off to Charleston, S.C., though he is thought to have returned home in 1805. Upon his father's death in 1806, he inherited "Manskin Lodge" in King William County, Virginia, where he later lived with his wife, Maria Carter Hall of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

The Wormeleys originally owned 12,076 acres in Berkeley and Frederick counties, Virginia, purchased by Ralph Wormeley IV in the 1740s. Ralph V inherited 3,712 acres from his father. He sold most of the property in 1797 with the exception of a lead mine, which he retained until his death in 1816. Ralph V frequently visited in Berkeley County with his family from the 1770s until his death, and consequently Warner Wormeley was familiar with the area. He was probably on such a visit there about 1805, when Drinker painted his portrait.⁴⁷

The painting is attributed to Drinker due to the facial characteristics, the typical bow-tie cravat, the fleshy body, and the drapery and column in the background.



Figure 5. George Steptoe Washington (1771?-1809). Oil on canvas, 35¼ x 26¾. Signed on relined canvas: "GSW age 27." Attributed to John Drinker, c. 1798. MESDA research file S-10429.

George Steptoe Washington was the son of Anne Steptoe (died c. 1780) and Colonel Samuel Washington (1734-1781), who was the brother of George Washington. George S. Washington was born at "Harewood," the family home in Jefferson County, Virginia. The portrait depicts an elegant young man at age 27. Again note Drinker's use of the column and trees in the background, facial features, hidden hand, and distinctive bow-tie cravat.⁴⁸



Figure 6. Lucy Payne Washington (1776-1848). Oil on canvas, 35 3/4 x 26 1/4. Signed on relined canvas: "LW" age 22." Attributed to John Drinker, c. 1798. MESDA research file S-10428.

Lucy Payne Washington was the sister of Dolley Madison, and grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She married George Steptoe Washington in 1793 and lived with him at "Harewood" in Jefferson County, Virginia. After her husband's death in 1809, she lived in Washington, D.C., where she married Supreme Court Justice Thomas Todd in 1812. The wedding ceremony was held at the White House; the couple afterward moved to Kentucky.⁴⁹

This portrait is again similar to that of Mrs. Briscoe's, although it shows a

better command of the canvas by Drinker. Mrs. Washington's face is typically rounded, with tight lips upturned at the corners, and her eyes are strangely directed. Her hands show little bone structure. Unlike her husband's portrait, Mrs. Washington is portrayed completely out-of-doors with only the trees and sky as a background.

Gabriel Jones (1724-1806) and Margaret Strother Jones (1726-1822). *Not illustrated. Signed: "Joe Drinker 1792."* Collection of Marguerite Strother Banks, 1941; current location unknown.

On November 25, 1941, Marguerite Strother Banks wrote to Mr. R. P. Tolman of the National Portrait Gallery concerning a pair of paintings which she owned.⁵⁰ The sitters were Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel Jones, and they were signed "Joe Drinker 1792." Gabriel Jones was a well-known lawyer in the Upper Shenandoah Valley. He married Margaret Strother on October 16, 1749.⁵¹

Over the past two years a search for these two portraits has been made through the Jones family. This search has revealed three portraits of Gabriel Jones and one of Mrs. Jones. Family tradition relates the story of two portraits of Gabriel Jones, one done by Gilbert Stuart, and the other a copy by one of his students. One of these portraits supposedly burned in a fire in Richmond, Virginia, during the Civil War. Ironically, none of the three portraits are the work of Gilbert Stuart.

One portrait of Gabriel Jones is located in a family collection in Kernstown, Virginia. The family tradition states that it is a copy by Edward Bruce after the original which hung in the State House in Richmond and was destroyed by fire.⁵³ This painting may be by Drinker.

A second portrait of Gabriel Jones is located in a family collection in Princeton, New Jersey. This portrait is more sophisticated than the Kernstown portrait, and definitely is not in the style of Drinker.

A third portrait is one of a pair depicting both Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel Jones, and it was illustrated on p. 12 of the *Baltimore Sun* for Sunday, January 7, 1906, in an article entitled "Virginia Heraldry, the Jones Lineage and Arms" by Jane Griffith Keys. These portraits are probably by Drinker, although neither clear photographs or their current locations are known. Any information leading to the location of these portraits would be welcomed.

Miss Adams is Director of Arlington House in Birmingham, Alabama.

FOOTNOTES

1. Simmons, Linda Crocker, *Jacob Frymire, American Limner*. (Washington, D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1975). Joshua Johnston is the subject of research by Carolyn Weekley, Curator, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia. Frederick Kemmelmeyer is the subject of research of the author, Brydying Adams, Arlington Historic House, Birmingham, Alabama. Oldridge/Aldridge is the subject of research of Linda Crocker Simmons. Simmons, Linda Crocker, *Charles*

Peale Polk a Limner and his Likenesses. (Washington, D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1981).

2. John Drinker's Gravestone in Morgan Chapel Cemetery, Bunker Hill, Berkeley County, West Virginia.
3. Biddle, Henry D. *The Drinker Family in America to and including the Eighth Generation*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1893), p. 9.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 9. "His losses by depreciated Continental paper money were very great; notwithstanding, he left a competency to each of his sons, his estate at the time of his decease being worth at least 6000 pounds."
5. Nicholson, Laurence Arnold. "Restoration of John Drinker's Compound," *The University Hospital Antiques Show*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 1967), pp. 35-39. Drinker's Court was restored by Mr. and Mrs. John P. Bracken between 1955 and 1965.
6. Biddle, *The Drinker Family*, p. 9.
7. *Tax Assessment Records*, City Clerk's Office, Courthouse Annex, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the years 1781, 1782, 1783, 1789, 1791, 1792, 1793.
8. *Pennsylvania Packet* (Philadelphia), 18 June 1787.
9. Sawitzky, William. *Matthew Pratt 1734-1805*. (New York: The New York Historical Society in cooperation with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1942), p. 16. There is a reference in the diary of Mrs. Henry (Elizabeth) Drinker about going to Matthew Pratt's funeral. This suggests a close family relationship, since Henry and Elizabeth Drinker were John Drinker Jr.'s uncle and aunt.
10. Biddle, *The Drinker Family*, p. 9.
11. *Deed Book 8*, p. 222, Berkeley County Courthouse, West Virginia.
12. *Deed Book 9*, p. 9, Berkeley County Courthouse, West Virginia.
13. *Tax Assessment Records*, City Clerk's Office, Courthouse Annex, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1789.
14. *Deed Book 9*, p. 10, Berkeley County Courthouse, West Virginia.
15. *Tax Assessment Records*, City Clerk's Office, Courthouse Annex, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1791, 1792, 1793.
16. *Tax Assessment Records*, City Clerk's Office, Courthouse Annex, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1794.
17. *The Philadelphia City Directory*, 1795, 1796 (MacPherson's) lists John Drinker, 2 Laurel Street, painter.
18. Kersecker, Guy L., *Marriage Records of Berkeley County, Virginia for the 1781-1854*. (Strasburg, Virginia: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1969.) Suretor Robert W. Wood, Bond 1b7.
19. *West Virginia Vital Statistics, Births, Deaths, and Marriages 1853-1862*, Berkeley County Courthouse, (Microfilm No. 34484) Elizabeth Drinker, No. 62. Gravestones, Morgan Chapel Cemetery, Bunker Hill, West Virginia.
20. *Tax Assessment Records*, City Clerk's Office, Courthouse Annex, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1797, 1798.
21. *U. S. Federal Census* for Philadelphia City, and the State of Pennsylvania, 1800, and the *Tax Assessment Records* for 1800 in Philadelphia.

22. *The Philadelphia City Directory* for 1801, 1802, lists John Drinker, portrait painter, Laurel Street; John Drinker, Limner, 3 Laurel Street.
23. *Tax Assessment Records*, City Clerk's Office, Courthouse Annex, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1802.
24. *Deed Book 17*, p. 225, Berkeley County Courthouse, West Virginia.
25. *Tax Assessment Records*, City Clerk's Office, Courthouse Annex, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1803, 1804, 1806, 1808, 1809, 1810.
26. *Deed Book 21*, p. 88, Berkeley County Courthouse, West Virginia, Wood, Don C., *The Berkeley Journal*. (The Berkeley County Historical Society, 1979), pp. 58-66. Also, deed research by Howard E. Butts.
27. *Deed Book 21*, p. 176, May 15, 1808, for Berkeley County. Information provided by Howard E. Butts.
28. Berkeley County, Virginia, *Census* for 1810.
29. *Martinsburg Gazette and Public Advertiser*, 8 January 1813, p. 3, and 10 July 1812, p. 3, and 7 July 1814, p. 3.
30. *U. S. Federal Census*, Berkeley County, Virginia, 1820.
31. Berkeley County, Virginia, *Census* for 1820. Feldin, Jeanne Robey, *Index to the 1820 Census of Virginia*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., 1976).
32. *Deed Book 34*, p. 332, May 1, 1824, Berkeley County Courthouse, West Virginia. Drinker purchased property from Joel Ward in this transaction.
33. *Martinsburg Gazette and Public Advertiser*, 23 February 1826, p. 3.
34. Morgan Chapel Cemetery, Bunker Hill, Berkeley County, West Virginia.
35. *Will Book 8*, p. 233, Berkeley County Courthouse, West Virginia. The will was written on April 21, 1823 and proved at Court on May 8, 1826.
36. Gravestone, Morgan Chapel Cemetery, Bunker Hill, Berkeley County, West Virginia.
37. *U. S. Federal Census*, Virginia, 1830: Elizabeth Drinker, 1 male 20-31, 2 female 20-31, 1 female 40-50, slaves 1 male 24 & under 36, 6 females under 5, 3 females 10 to 24, 1 female 24 to 36. *U. S. Federal Census*, Virginia, 1840: Elizabeth Drinker, 1 male 40 to 50, 1 female 60 to 70, slaves 1 male under 10, 3 males 10 to 24, 2 females under 10, 2 females 10-24, and 1 female 24 to 36. *U. S. Federal Census*, Virginia, 1850: Elizabeth Drinker, 75 years, female, born in Ireland with John Burke, 40, male farmer, born in Ireland.
38. *Deed Book 40*, p. 532, December 26, 1833: *Deed Book 44*, p. 4, September 23, 1839, Berkeley County Courthouse, West Virginia.
39. *Martinsburg Gazette and Public Advertiser*, 28 July 1842, p. 3.
40. *Will Book (Re-recorded) 2*, p. 255, Berkeley County Courthouse, Berkeley County, West Virginia.
41. Information as recorded in the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts' Accession Files 973-1&2. Also interview with Frank L. Horton on September 29, 1981.
42. McClellan, Elizabeth, *History of American Costume 1607-1870*. (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 278-279 and pp. 304-305.
43. Payne, Blanche, *History of Costume*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 452-454.

44. Genealogical information compiled by Mrs. H. R. (Ann W.) Thomas, Round Hill, Virginia. Simmons, Linda Crocker, *Jacob Frymire, American Limner*. (Washington, D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1975), p. 44.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*
47. I am grateful to Jonathan H. Poston of Bluefield, West Virginia for the suggestion that the portrait of Warner Lewis Wormeley might be a Drinker, and for the genealogical information he provided about Wormeley.
48. Wayland, John W., *The Washingtons and their Homes*, (Staunton, Virginia: McClure Printing Company, 1944), pp. 145, 148.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Marguerite Strother Banks to Mr. R. P. Tolman, November 25, 1941, *John Drinker File*, National Collection of Fine Arts and National Portrait Gallery Library, Washington, D.C.
51. Letter from William Strother Jones, Jr. to his children on February 5, 1910. Courtesy C. Maury Jones, Princeton, New Jersey.
52. Letter from C. Maury Jones to E. Bryding Adams, March 1, 1980.
53. Letter from C. Maury Jones to E. Bryding Adams, March 11, 1980.

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Figure 1. Detail of the Lincoln-Mecklenburg County area of the Catawba River Valley taken from the 1808 "First Actual Survey of North Carolina" by Jonathan Price and John Strother, engraved by W. Harrison and printed by C. P. Harrison of Philadelphia.

The Development of Regional Style in the Catawba River Valley: A Further Look

LUKE BECKERDITE

In the May, 1980 issue of the *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, the author published an article entitled "City Meets the Country: the Work of Peter Eddleman, Cabinet-maker."¹ This article examined the impact of the Delaware Valley style upon Piedmont North Carolina by artisans emigrating from the Middle Atlantic region during the third quarter of the eighteenth century, and the tempering of this style resulting from the Catawba Valley's isolation from northern urban centers and North Carolina's tidewater region. Here, an attempt is made to provide a further look at the development of regional style in the Catawba Valley through an anonymous group of furniture, the "fluted pilaster group."

Histories associated with the fluted pilaster group point to a Catawba Valley origin, and suggest more specifically southeast Gaston County or northwest Mecklenburg County. A secretary-with-bookcase (Fig. 3) in this group was said to have been made for Zenas Alexander as a wedding present for his wife Margaret. The initials "M" and "A" were set into the ebonized rosettes of the pediment, lending credence to that tradition.² Zenas Alexander was a silversmith and gunsmith who worked near Charlotte, in Mecklenburg County, from about 1800 to 1826.³ Apparently, Alexander prospered in his trade; between 1801 and his death in 1826 he made numerous land transactions⁴ and took at least four apprentices.⁵ His estate inventory, proven in 1827, lists over \$3,600 in sales, accounts, and notes due, two town lots in Charlotte, a tract of land north of the town, slaves, and "plantations" in Tennessee.⁶ Family tradition has main-



Figure 2. Corner cupboard, 22 Nov. 1801, walnut with yellow pine secondary wood. Feet partially cut off at bottoms. HOA 104", WOA 74¼". Private collection. MESDA research file S-1699.

tained that the name "ROBT ALEXANDER" inlaid on the small raised panels on the tympanum was added later by Zenas' son, Robert.⁷ If so, the ebonizing and precise lettering indicate that Robert may have ordered his work done by the same tradesman.



Figure 3. Secretary-with-bookcase, ca. 1800, illustrated in Paul H. Burroughs' Southern Antiques, p. 117, plate 7. Although the house in which this piece last stood was destroyed by fire, the secretary-with-bookcase may have survived. MESDA is interested in any information about this piece.



Figure 4. Secretary-with-bookcase, ca. 1800, cherry with cherry and yellow pine secondary wood. Feet partially tipped. HOA 105 1/4", WOA 43 1/2", DOA 23 1/2". MESDA accession 2845.

Further evidence of this cabinetmaker's patronage can be found in traditions surrounding the secretary-with-bookcase illustrated in Fig. 4. It has an oral tradition of ownership by William Alexander Graham, Governor of North Carolina from 1845 to 1849.⁸ Considering stylistic and construction details of the secretary-with-bookcase in relation to the dated corner cupboard (Fig. 2), it is possible that the secretary-with-bookcase was made for William Graham's father, Joseph (Fig. 10), indicating that this tradesman found work among the wealthier circles of Catawba Valley society. Joseph Graham had an extensive estate,⁹ including houses near Denver and Beatties Ford in Lincoln County,¹⁰ and owned interest in a merchant blast furnace, two forges, and an iron-rich tract of land known as the "Big Ore Bank."¹¹

Having more conjectural histories are a corner cupboard (Fig. 6) and a chest of drawers (Fig. 5). Although the corner cupboard can be traced no earlier than the mid-twentieth century, the inscription "J— McCorkle" written in chalk on the back boards strongly suggests a Lincoln or Mecklenburg County origin. Census records, estate inventories, and wills of the area show a number of individuals with that name, which was associated originally with the Scots-Irish settlement of western Rowan County. By the same token, the chest of drawers also may be attributed to the Mecklenburg area by virtue of the fact that the Morrison name frequently occurs there. No specific individual living during the 1790-1810 period could be matched with the chest, however. In addition to these, the desk-and-bookcase (Fig. 8) has a history of descent in the Burwell family of Charlotte, North Carolina,¹² and the secretary-with-bookcase (Fig. 7) was purchased from a family in York, South Carolina, downriver from Charlotte.¹³

The construction of the fluted pilaster group is best understood if the group is considered in two phases. The earliest examples (Figs. 1-6) demonstrate an extremely uniform approach to design. This group is distinguished by having squat ogee feet with large elongated brackets and exterior profiles which are virtually identical from piece to piece. More distinctive than the patterns of the feet is the technique by which they are blocked. A massive, single piece of horizontally-grained wood extends from the front foot to the rear of the back foot and is shaped so that it is hidden from view (Fig. 5a). All of the blocks examined were secured with wrought nails. Of all the



Figure 5. Chest of drawers, ca. 1800, walnut with yellow pine secondary wood. HOA 40 $\frac{7}{8}$ ", WOA 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", DOA 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Private collection. MESDA research file S-2819.

construction techniques employed by this cabinetmaker, the blocking was the least sophisticated, since the large, nailed blocks were especially incompatible with shrinkage and expansion of the case bottom and sides. Both the foot and bracket profiles, blocking technique, and profiles of the cornice and base moldings are reminiscent of the work of James Gheen, a cabinetmaker who worked in the Second Creek area of Rowan County during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.¹⁴ The later pieces in the fluted pilaster group have French feet, and the sides of the case continue to the floor, forming supports for the applied feet.

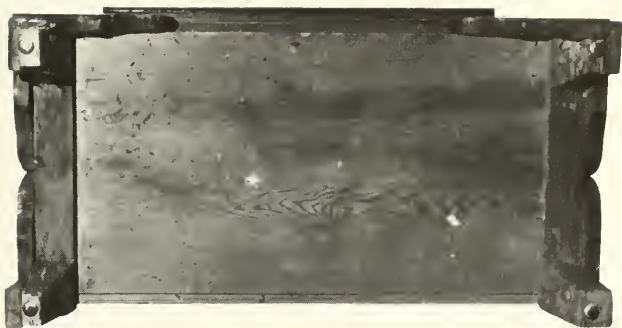


Figure 5a. Detail of the foot blocking of the chest of drawers illustrated in Fig. 5.

Of all the furniture in the early group, the design of the corner cupboards (Figs. 2 and 6) is the most unusual. Both are made in two sections with the backboards dovetailed into the top and bottom of each section (Fig. 6a); the dovetails of the upper case extend below the base of that section, forming foot-like supports. In the South, the only other known instance in which a dovetail joint is used to secure backboards at the top and bottom is in corner cupboards produced by Moravian cabinetmakers in Salem, North Carolina. Dovetail joints of this type tend to create problems, since cross-grain shrinkage causes the back to bow away from the top and sides. The cupboard in Fig. 6 has large scrub-planed backboards which are set into rabbeted sides and secured with nails and trunnels (pegs) as large as $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch in diameter. Other Germanic characteristics include the use of trunnels rather than face-nailing to secure the backboards to the interior shelves and to attach moldings, feet, and architectural details.

In contrast to the corner cupboards, other pieces demonstrate more common construction. The chest of drawers (Fig. 5) and the secretary section of Fig. 4 are basic dovetailed cases with tongue and grooved backboards set into rabbeted sides. In the early group, dustboards are slightly thinner than the drawer blades, set into grooved sides, and they extend to within about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches of the backboards. Other changes in construction occur in the later pieces. For example, the backboards of the desk section of Fig. 8 are paneled into the sides and top of the case, and the bookcase is similar, with the exception of the fact that it is paneled in at the bottom and nailed at the top.



Figure 6. Corner cupboard, ca. 1805, walnut with yellow pine secondary wood. HOA 99 $\frac{7}{8}$ " , WOA 47 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". MESDA accession 2747.

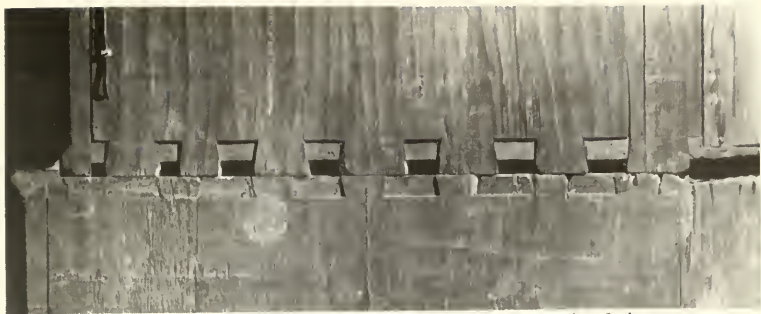


Figure 6a. Detail of the dovetail construction of the back of the corner cupboard illustrated in Fig. 6.

Possibly the changes in the desk-and-bookcase represent the work of a closely related hand.

The design of the arched doors and their extrados provides further insight into the cabinetmaker's understanding of his art (Fig. 2). To avoid stress points, the door arches were cut from a board taken from the fork of a tree, so that the grain flows with the curve of the arch. The extrados were cut from ordinary quarter-sawn boards since they performed no structural function. Except for scarf joints occasionally used in piecing together the arches, the doors were constructed using normal mortise and tenon joints pinned with large trunnels.

Additional details characterizing the fluted pilaster group include the following:

- Drawer construction. Drawer bottoms are beveled, set into grooves in the sides and front, and nailed at the back. Large case drawers without lip molded edges are stopped by small blocks attached to the backboards.
- Moldings. Moldings are commonly face-nailed or pinned with trunnels. Cornice moldings are virtually identical on all bookcases as are the intermediate moldings in the early phase.
- Pilasters. Pilasters are made in three sections in the early group. If a section was to be fluted, work lines were scribed out and the flutes cut with a gouge. Unlike most urban work, the scribe lines were not scraped away.

Although a number of techniques employed by this tradesman were relatively provincial, the earliest pieces demonstrate a definite concern with solid construction. Typical of Neoclassical furniture, construction in the later phase is more fragile.

In the fluted pilaster group the impact of the Delaware Valley style is apparent in the use of ogee feet with spur-like

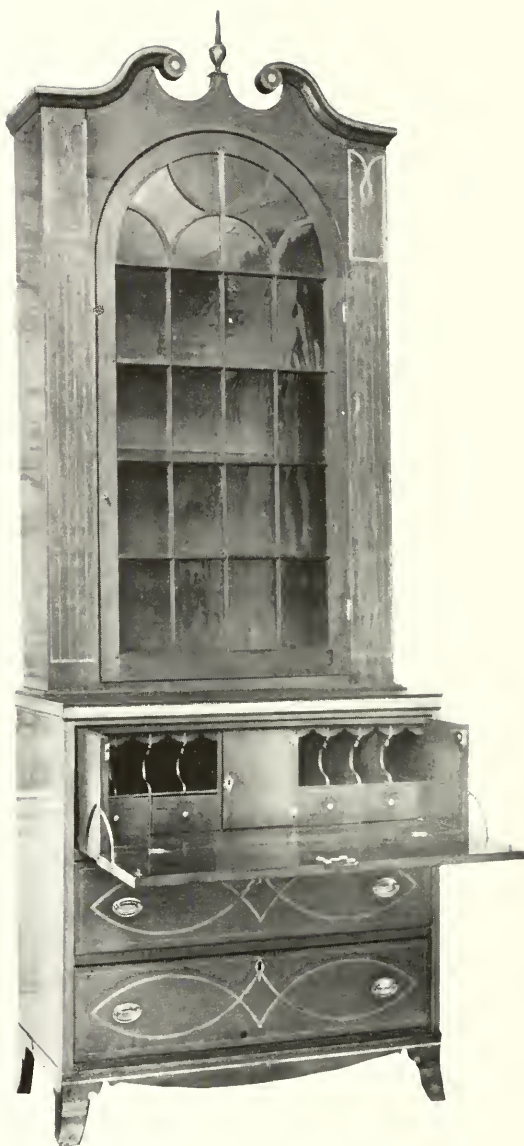


Figure 7. Secretary-with-bookcase, ca. 1810, cherry with yellow pine secondary wood. HOA 116¼", WOA 42½", DOA 20¾". Private collection. MESDA research file S-2458.

cusps, classical architectural details such as pilasters, broken-scroll pediments, and Palladian doors with extrados and keystones, shaped panels, and conventionally arranged desk interiors sometimes having ogee blocked drawer fronts (Fig. 3). As the secretary-with-bookcase in Fig. 4 demonstrates, the cabinetmaker's interpretation and incorporation of these details resulted in a somewhat adulterated version of the Delaware Valley style. For example, the squat, heavily-bracketed ogee feet make the secretary appear unusually weighty in comparison to the attenuated proportions of the bookcase, whereas a Philadelphia example would normally have taller, more robust feet. Likewise, the pediment of the bookcase lacks the graceful upward sweep typical of mainstream Delaware Valley work.

As one might expect, minor changes in form occur during the later phase, the most obvious being the introduction of French feet, less architectural moldings, and in one instance (Fig. 8), a fallboard. The latter detail is surprising in that fallboards stylistically precede the use of secretary compartments. The interiors of the secretary and desk (Figs. 7 and 8) differ from the earlier examples by having a single row of drawers surmounted by pigeonhole dividers with shaped fascias, and by omitting "document" drawers. All of these changes, with the exception of the fallboard, are essentially stylistic and are consistent with developments in the Delaware Valley.

While it is apparent that this cabinetmaker made use of certain sophisticated details, ornament on his furniture and the architectural context in which much of it is presented reveal a provincial approach to design. For example, the pilasters on the corner cupboard in Fig. 2 are unusual, having a large fluted section resting uneasily over a more narrow column. The continuity of the pilaster is further interrupted by the inlaid fylfot, a regional innovation in itself, and by the inlaid molding forming an impost from which the arch of the doors springs. Yet another non-architectural detail is the double cove-and-astagal base molding of the pilasters. These reinterpretations of an urban detail are an interesting foil to the successful shaping of the lower door panels and stiles, the arched doors, and the broken-scroll pediment. Inlaid ornament is the most obvious regional aspect of the fluted pilaster group, illustrated here by the inscription "JA^S.M.B.S./Nov.22.1801" set into raised panels on the tympanum, the fylfot on the pilasters, and the stylized flower also inlaid on the tympanum. Like the corner



Figure 8. Desk-and-bookcase, ca. 1815, walnut with yellow pine secondary wood. HOA 104¼", WOA 43", DOA 24". Private collection. MESDA research file S-7110. The pediment (Fig. 8a) could not be photographed in place due to height limitations in the room.



Figure 8a. Pediment of the desk-and-bookcase illustrated in Fig. 8.

cupboard, the secretary-with-bookcase in Fig. 2 and the chest of drawers (Fig. 5) have personalized inlays. The Roman letters comprising these inscriptions resemble stonecutter's work in their precision. Stars (Fig. 4), "loops" (Figs. 2, 4, 7 and 8), and other floral devices (Fig. 8a) also occur in the fluted pilaster group.

Occasionally, inlays are used to simulate architectural details, though usually in a non-architectural fashion. Rather than being fluted, the upper members of the pilasters of the secretary-with-bookcases in Figs. 2 and 4 have inlays in imitation of drop pendants. Stringing and banding is often employed to accentuate architectural features as demonstrated by the odd serpentine banding on the fascia above the writing compartments, the stringing below the cornice moldings, and the drawer fronts of Figs. 2 and 4.

Stylization is an almost inevitable result of time and isolation from new knowledge and sources of design. Even in the earliest stage of the fluted pilaster group, this tendency is present, shown by the minute keystones of Figs. 2, 3, and 4, and by the intaglio arch on the central prospect door of the secretary-with-bookcase (Fig. 3), possibly done in imitation of carved prospects often seen on urban examples. Stylization is even more apparent in the corner cupboard (Fig. 6), the secretary-with-bookcase (Fig. 7), and the desk-and-bookcase. Unlike the earlier corner cupboard which has robust molded door mullions and flutes in both sections of its pilasters, the example in Fig. 6 has flat mullions and pilasters with a single flute circumscribed by string inlay on the lower shaft. On the secretary-with-bookcase (Fig. 7) and the desk-and-bookcase stringing replaces the flutes altogether. Basic concepts do persist, however; all examples in the fluted pilaster group utilize one design formula for the pilasters,

proportional arrangements remain consistent, and inlays are continually used to accentuate details. For example, the light wood circles highlighting the volutes of Fig. 4 are repeated on the volutes of Figs. 7 and 8 and the top corners of the table in Fig. 9. Epitomizing this entire process are the flower and initials "I M" inlaid on the pediment of the desk-and-bookcase, demonstrating the complexities of continuity, assimilation, and innovation which result in the development of regional style.



Figure 9. Side table, ca. 1815, cherry with yellow pine and poplar secondary woods. HOA $28\frac{7}{8}$ ", WOA $29\frac{1}{8}$ ", DOA $23\frac{3}{8}$ ". Private collection. MESDA research file S-2453.

Although the cabinetmaker who executed the fluted pilaster group remains anonymous, one John Wills emerges as a possible candidate. In *Southern Antiques*, Paul Burroughs, without citing any source, states that the secretary-with-bookcase (Fig. 3)

was made by John Wills of Gaston County.¹⁵ Since this piece probably dates about 1800, the cabinetmaker's residence would have been Lincoln County; Gaston County was formed from Lincoln County in 1846.¹⁶ Adding further confusion to Burroughs' reference is the existence of two John "Wells," a father and son, in Lincoln County at approximately the same time.¹⁷

The settler who established the Wills name in Lincoln County was Gerhart (Garret) Wills (Will).¹⁸ Emigrating from the German Palatinate via Rotterdam, Wills arrived in Philadelphia in November, 1744 on the vessel *Friendship*.¹⁹ He was naturalized in Berks County, Pennsylvania on 4 April 1762.²⁰ While living in Berks County, Wills married Mary Barbara Drach, and the couple bore two sons, Daniel and John.²¹ By 6 June 1772, the Wills family had emigrated to Lincoln County, North Carolina, settling on Leeper's Creek on the north side of the Catawba River.²²

John Wills began acquiring land in 1773 when his father granted him seventy-four acres on Leeper's Creek in consideration of the "affection which I have and do bear toward my son."²³ John made various other land transactions in the vicinity of Leeper's and Dutchman's Creek. Some time before 1778, Wills married Catherine McGee. To them were born ten children, Anna Magdalene, Catherine, Eve, John, Daniel, Christine, Conrad, Barbara, Fronica, and Isaac.²⁴ Although John Wills died in 1793, his land was not divided among his sons until 1805.²⁵

John Wills, Jr. was born on 18 April 1784, and, according to family tradition, he was the cabinetmaker mentioned in Burroughs. Like his father and grandfather, Wills purchased most of his land near Leeper's Creek. In 1809 he married Ann Best, and over the next twenty-two years they had ten children.²⁶ By 1832 the family had moved to Cape Girardeau County, Missouri where they settled in the Apple Creek Township. John died there about 1839.²⁷ Probate records for John Wills indicate that he died intestate, and contain no suggestion of a cabinetmaking trade.²⁸ Unfortunately, there is only circumstantial evidence associating John Wills with the fluted pilaster group. Apparently, Alexander family tradition has maintained that the secretary-with-bookcase was made by John Wills, and regional tradition has upheld Wills' reputation as a noted cabinetmaker.

Another clue to the fluted pilaster cabinetmaker's identity, may be the "J—McCorkle" signature on the back of the corner

cupboard in Fig. 6. Although records for J. McCorkles in Lincoln and Mecklenburg fail to reveal any indication of a cabinet-making trade, it is conceivable that J. McCorkle was the maker rather than merely an owner.



Figure 10. Miniature portrait, ca. 1800, thought to be of Joseph Graham. The portrait descended from the Graham family through marriage to the Harris family of Charlotte, North Carolina. Watercolor on ivory. HOA 3", WOA 2½". MESDA accession 2825.

Although the identity of the artisan who produced this group of furniture remains elusive, the fluted pilaster pieces provide further demonstration of the development of strong regional styles in North Carolina's western piedmont. Further, the furniture is an index to the tastes of prominent members of "back country" society such as Zenas Alexander and the

Grahams, all of whom certainly possessed the means to bespeak the finest work available in the region.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Luke Beckerdite, "City Meets the Country: the Work of Peter Eddleman, Cabinetmaker," *The Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, Vol. 6, No. 1, May 1980, pp. 58-73.
2. Paul H. Burroughs, *Southern Antiques* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie Inc., 1931), pp. 108, 117.
3. George Barton Cutten, *Silversmiths of North Carolina*, Rev. Mary Reynolds Peacock (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1973), p. 4.
4. *Ibid*, p. 4.
5. Mecklenburg County Court Minutes record that Alexander took the following apprentices into the gun and silversmith's trades: James Mitchel, July 1798; James McKee, 29 January 1805; Henry McBride, 24 April 1810; and Elisha Smartt, 24 July 1810. James H. Craig, *The Arts and Crafts in North Carolina, 1699-1840* (Winston-Salem: Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, 1966), pp. 13-15.
6. Estate Records for Zenas Alexander, February term, 1827, *Mecklenburg County Estates Records*, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.
7. Burroughs, *Southern Antiques*, p. 108.
8. MESDA research file S-2141.
9. Estate Records for Joseph Graham, July term, 1837, *Lincoln County Estate Records*, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.
10. Frances Benjamin Johnston and Thomas Tileston Waterman, *The Early Architecture of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), pp. 208, 215.
11. William L. Sherrill, *Annals of Lincoln County* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1972), pp. 57, 58, 114, 436-442.
12. MESDA research file S-7110.
13. MESDA research file S-2458.
14. Carolyn Weekley, "James Gheen, Piedmont North Carolina Cabinet-maker," *The Magazine Antiques*, Vol. 103, No. 5, May 1973, pp. 940-944.
15. Burroughs, *Southern Antiques*, p. 108.
16. David Leroy Corbitt, *The Formation of North Carolina Counties, 1663-1943* (1950; reprint ed., Raleigh: Department of Archives and History, 1969), p. 103.
17. Estates Records for John Wells, 1819, *Lincoln County Estates Records*, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

18. Laban Miles Hoffman, *Our Kin: Being a History of the Hoffman, Rhyne, Costner, Rudisill, Best, Hovis, Hoyle, Wills, Shetley, Jenkins, Holland, Hambright, Gaston, Withers, Cansler, Clemmer, and Lineberger Families* (1915; reprint ed., Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1968), p. 479.
19. Ralph Beaver Strasburger, *Pennsylvania German Pioneers: A Publication of the Original Lists of Arrivals in the Port of Philadelphia From 1727-1808* (1934; reprint ed., Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1966), Vol. 1, p. 356.
20. Pennsylvania (Colonies) Supreme Court, *Persons Naturalized in the Province of Pennsylvania, 1740-1773* (1876; reprint ed., Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1967), p. 77.
21. Belva Wills compilation of Genealogical Information on the Wills Family. Belva Wills to Luke Beckerdite, 4 April 1980, Copy on file at MESDA.
22. *Deed Book 1*, Lincoln County, p. 665.
23. *Deed Book 1*, Lincoln County, p. 785.
24. Wills Genealogical Information, Belva Wills. Also, Hoffman, *Our Kin*, pp. 479-480. In *Our Kin* Hoffman states that the children of Gerhart Wills were Anne Magdalene, Catherine (b. 1779), Eve, John (b. 1784), Daniel (b. 1786), Christina (b. 1788), Conrad (b. 1789), Barbara (b. 1791), Fanny, and Isaac. These were, rather, the children of John Wills, Gerhart's son born 19 May 1748. Apparently, Hoffman was unaware of one generation.
25. *Deed Book 23*, Lincoln County, p. 67.
26. Hoffman, *Our Kin*, pp. 479, 273. See footnote 24.
27. *History of Southeast Missouri* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1888), p. 818.
28. Probate Records for John Wills, *Cape Girardeau County Probate Records*, Reel No. 60, pp. 169, 173, 177, 197, 260-263, 287, 305, 370, 371, 380, 384, 549. Reel No. 73, pp. 232-233.

The author extends his appreciation for assistance with this article to Ms. Belva Wills.

Book Reviews

American Stonewares, The Art and Craft of Utilitarian Potters. By Georgeanna H. Greer. (Exton, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1981). Preface, "keys for stoneware identification," glossary, annotated bibliography for American stoneware, bibliography, index. Pp. ix, 286, 381 illus. incl. 16 color. \$40.00.

Interest in American stoneware has increased dramatically in recent years due in part to the publication of a number of fine regional catalogs and articles on specific potteries and various aspects of technology. In *American Stoneware*, Greer synthesizes much of this new knowledge and adds her own research and experience as a potter to produce a good general history of technology and production.

Initially, the author explores the European origins of America's stoneware traditions by classifying stoneware in relation to other ceramic types; she then discusses the development of high-fired wares in Germany's Rhine Valley from the twelfth to seventeenth centuries, as well as the growth of the later English tradition. By comparing the work of several potters, Greer convincingly demonstrates that details from both of these traditions, brought to America by immigrating artisans, were assimilated here and contributed to the production of distinctive American traditions. Although the author's position is essentially sound, she succumbs to the frequently published dogma which states that "American decorative art forms remained ten to twenty years behind European cultures in style," which is an imperfect view in the light of recent research.

Greer introduces the reader to the properties of clay and methods of locating deposits, processing, and "turning." She

discusses the arrangement of the shop, kiln construction, and apprentice-journeyman-master relations. Photographs of the Reem's Creek Pottery, taken by William A. Barnhill c. 1915, serve as an excellent backdrop for the author's examination of both traditional and modern potter's methods. Building upon this, Greer uses numerous excellent photographs and diagrams of pottery from different regions, enhanced by detailed descriptions and sections of neck, mouth, rim, base, foot, and handle forms to establish terminology and thereby illustrate the complexity of stoneware forms. Traditional, temporal, and regional patterns of form are discussed generally, and often in terms of production technique and social use. However, *American Stonewares* might have been more representative had Dr. Greer included examples from additional potting areas, such as Maryland and Virginia, rather than relying quite so heavily on the scope of her own fine collection.

The principal methods of decoration, and variations within these methods, are presented not only from a technical perspective, but also in light of regional characteristics. For example, the author discusses the use of both iron-bearing and kaolin slips in Edgefield, South Carolina, and the stylistic chronological shift exemplified by the increased use of cobalt, slip trailing and stenciling as vessel forms became standardized and competition among potteries increased during the last half of the nineteenth century. Also covered are more obscure techniques, including scraffito, air brushing, and the use of glass fragments which, upon melting, leave decorative streaks during firing.

For the serious student of American stoneware, chapters 5 and 6, "Glass, Gloss, and Glaze" and "Passage Through Fire," will prove most valuable. All four major glazes for stoneware, i.e. salt, alkaline, slip, and "Bristol," are explained in reference to historical background, ingredients, preparation, application, and firing characteristics. In fact, the author is best known for her published work on alkaline glazes, and her knowledge of regional variants, such as the Catawba Valley "cinder glaze," as well as alternative glaze mixtures and fluxes attests to the thoroughness of her research. Of utmost importance in determining the surface character of alkaline glazed stoneware is the atmosphere of the kiln in relation to metallic oxides present in the clay body and glaze. Greer provides an exceptional explanation of reduction and oxidation as they affect both

alkaline and salt vapor glazes. She also examines kiln design (i.e. drafting qualities) as it relates to these processes. The section dealing with kiln types could have been improved by the inclusion of sections and plans rather than just the perspective views used. Detailed descriptions of kiln furniture, loading or "setting" the kiln, and the firing process are also included in chapter 6.

For the present, however, Dr. Greer's work represents the best overview of American stoneware that has been published.

One of the most interesting sections in *American Stonewares* deals with imperfect pottery and the conditions producing various faults. In addition to the obvious problems associated with under-firing and over-firing, the author examines the effects of iron burning out during reduction firings, the expansion of large particles of compounds such as lime, fly ash, impurities in the clay, and glaze defects; halftones illustrate each of these.

American Stonewares concludes with very brief chapters on foreign importation, the distribution of utilitarian stoneware, and the decline of the potter's trade in America. Although the book has a few minor shortcomings and would have benefited from a more thorough proof reading, it is written with a potter's insight and embodies a good deal of valuable information. Hopefully, it will serve as a starting point from which more detailed regional studies of stoneware can begin. For the present, however, Dr. Greer's work represents the best overview of American stoneware that has been published.

LUKE BECKERDITE

MESDA seeks manuscripts which treat virtually any facet of southern decorative art for publication in the JOURNAL. The MESDA staff would also like to examine any privately-held primary research material (documents and manuscripts) from the South, and southern newspapers published in 1820 and earlier.

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